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English and MFA In Creative Writing

Saint Mary's College of California

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ENGLISH

FACULTY

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Ben Xu, Ph.D., *Professor*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

When students have completed a program of study in English, they should be able to:

- **ENGAGE** in informed, active reading, bringing to bear a broad base of literary, historical and cultural knowledge
- **READ** critically a wide range of literary texts, with an awareness of the theoretical assumptions behind various interpretive strategies, and the ability to choose appropriate methods of inquiry and to formulate clear questions
- **APPLY** a variety of reading strategies, combining critical detachment with the intellectual, imaginative, and emotional engagement necessary for appreciation
- **WRITE** clear, well-reasoned prose in a variety of situations (academic, professional, social) for a variety of audiences and support their arguments with appropriate, thoughtfully analyzed evidence
- **CONVERSE** articulately about texts and interpretations, understanding that interpretation is often a dialogic, collaborative process.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

LOWER DIVISION

English 19, 29

These courses must be taken in sequence.

English 19 is prerequisite to English 29. English 29 is prerequisite to English 167, 168, and 170.

UPPER DIVISION

English 103, 104, 175

One course in literary theory, chosen from the following:

167, 168, 170

One American literature survey, chosen from the following:

150, 151, 152

One course in **English** or **American literature before 1800**

One course in **English** or **American literature before 1900**

Four additional courses in English. No more than one of these may be lower division.

The English major provides a broad foundation in the discipline. Students who desire to focus on a specific area of interest may do so by choosing electives within the major that meet the following requirements:

- **CREATIVE WRITING EMPHASIS:**
 - English 25 (preferably freshman or sophomore year)
 - Any three upper-division creative writing classes:
 - English 102 (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, dramatic writing, screenwriting)
 - Two semesters of English 26 (.25 credit)
- **LITERARY THEORY AND HISTORY EMPHASIS**
(preparation for graduate study)
 - One additional course in literary criticism or theory
 - One additional pre-1900 course
 - English 198 (honors thesis) in the fall semester of the senior year
 - English 200, the graduate-level course in modernism (undergraduates must apply to enroll in this course)
- **DRAMATIC AND FILM ARTS EMPHASIS:**
 - English 125 or 126 (Film)
 - Any three of the following:
 - English 102: Dramatic Writing or Screenwriting
 - English 182: The Drama
 - English 183: Topics in Drama
 - English 184: Contemporary Drama
 - English 185: Individual Dramatists
 - Other English and upper-division January Term courses with film or drama-based content may also apply to the emphasis.

TEACHING CREDENTIAL IN ENGLISH

The major in English has been accepted, with certain modifications, as meeting the subject matter preparation requirements of the State of California for a teaching credential. Completion of the approved program waives the Praxis and SSAT examinations. It is still necessary to take a sequence of education courses. At Saint Mary's, these are available at the graduate level (some may be taken during the senior year). It is important that those thinking of a teaching career consult both the coordinator of the Subject Matter Preparation Program in English and the director of the Single Subject Credential Program in the School of Education to make sure that all the prerequisites for the credential are fulfilled.

The department recommends the study of foreign languages. Especially those students who plan to do graduate work should consult their advisors about work in other languages (e.g., German, Italian, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek).

A major in dramatic arts is available through the Department of Performing Arts. Requirements for this major include electives chosen from among **English 182, 183, 184, 185**.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Students who successfully complete two years in the Integral Program before declaring an English major are exempt from the department's Shakespeare, pre-1800, and pre-1900 requirements.

MINOR REQUIREMENTS

ENGLISH MINOR

A minor in English requires **English 19, 29, 175**, and three upper-division English electives.

CREATIVE WRITING MINOR

The creative writing minor is designed for students who wish to explore their creative potential as writers. The creative writing minor is also excellent preparation for students who wish to gain a greater appreciation of the art of writing, who wish to pursue a career in writing or journalism, or who simply wish to develop their academic or business writing skills.

A minor in creative writing requires **English 19, 25**, two semesters of **26**, and three upper-division courses chosen from among the following:

English 100: Advanced Composition

English 102: Creative Writing Workshop

(may be repeated for credit in fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, drama, and screenwriting).

PREREQUISITE GRADE

Any course listed in this department with a prerequisite assumes a grade of C– or better in the prerequisite course.

C O U R S E S

LOWER DIVISION

3 Practice in Writing*

Designed to enable students to bridge the gap between their present level of writing competency and that expected of students entering **English 4**. Students focus on developing and organizing ideas, constructing complex sentences, and enhancing proofreading and editing skills. Enrollment in each section limited to 10 to allow individualized instruction. A grade of at least C– is prerequisite to enrollment in **English 4**.

**Does not satisfy an area requirement.*

4 Composition*

Students write analytical, expository and persuasive essays; they also study examples of good writing. Students are expected to produce thoughtful, lively essays characterized by a clear thesis, adequate development of ideas, careful organization, coherent paragraphs, and sentences that employ the conventions of standard written English.

English 4 teaches a writing process that ranges from developing ideas through careful revision. Instructors often employ a peer-editing approach, in which students present their work to classmates, who respond with suggestions for improvement. This procedure teaches critical reading skills and helps students to become effective editors of their own and others' writing. A grade of at least C– is prerequisite to enrollment in **English 5**.

**Does not satisfy an area requirement.*

5 Argument and Research*

Students continue to develop the rhetorical and critical-thinking skills they need to analyze texts and to structure complex arguments. In addition, the course gives students practice in exploring ideas through library research and in supporting a thesis through appropriate use of sources. Students write and revise three or more essays, at least one of which is a substantial research essay that presents an extended argument.

**Does not satisfy an Area requirement.*

19 Introduction to Literary Analysis

A course to introduce skills of analysis and interpretation that will help students to understand and enjoy works of literature and to articulate their understanding in discussion and essays. Special attention is given to literary terms and conventions and to the problems involved in writing about works of literature. Required for English majors, this course begins the major and is prerequisite to **English 29**.

25 Creative Writing: Multi-Genre Studies

An introduction to the critical and creative techniques and vocabularies of the major genres of creative writing—poetry, fiction, nonfiction, playwriting, and screenwriting. Students will be introduced to the craft of these genres while learning to explore their own written voice in a workshop-style environment.

Curriculum English

26 Creative Writing Reading Series (.25)

Students enrolled in this course attend the public events of the Creative Writing Reading Series and have an opportunity to meet visiting writers and discuss the writing and performances of the readers in the series. (Course may be repeated for credit. Students in the creative writing minor must take this course twice.)

27 English Department Book Club (.25)

This class meets for one hour a week or two hours every other week to discuss works chosen jointly by an instructor and interested students. Its focus will vary from semester to semester, but may include such topics as books and the films based on them, fantasy fiction, memoir, detective fiction, or contemporary writing.

29 Issues in Literary Study

An introduction to the disciplinary concerns relevant to the study of English and American literature. Through readings in theory and literature, class discussion and writing, students engage with the following topics: diverse interpretive approaches, the role of the reader, and canon formation. *Prerequisite:* English 19. This course is a prerequisite for English 167, 168 and 170.

UPPER DIVISION

100 Advanced Composition

This course is designed to improve students' analytical, persuasive and expository writing as well as to help them develop voice and style. Students will build on their research skills with the aim of producing effective upper-division college papers on complex topics. In addition, the course will cover motivation and commitment to writing and revising, appealing to specific audiences, developing and organizing ideas. *Prerequisites:* English 4 and 5. *Exception:* transfer students with advanced standing may take this course in lieu of English 5.

101 Writing-Tutor Workshop (.25)

Training in the art of helping fellow students develop, organize, and articulate their ideas in writing. Students develop tutoring skills through practice and discussion in a workshop setting.

102 Creative Writing

Offerings rotate among poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction and dramatic writing. May be repeated for credit as genre varies.

103 British Literature I

Chronological study of British literature from the Middle Ages to 1700, including Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, with attention to close reading and historical context. English 103 is not prerequisite to English 104.

104 British Literature II

Chronological study of British literature from the Neoclassic, Romantic, Victorian and Modern periods, with attention to close reading and historical context. Writers studied may include Pope, Wordsworth, Austen, Mary Shelley, Dickens, Woolf, Yeats and T.S. Eliot. English 103 is not prerequisite to English 104.

105 Children's Literature

Intensive readings in imaginative literature for children. Topics may include adolescent fiction, multicultural literature, picture books, fairy tales, issues in selecting books for children, history, enduring themes, forms of fantasy, conventions and relationship to adult literature.

110 Linguistics

An introduction to the scientific study of language. Language as a system: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and discourse. Language in context: language in relation to history, culture, social class, region, ethnicity, and gender. Language considered biologically: as a uniquely human characteristic, in brain development, first- and second-language acquisition, and in animal communication systems.

111 Topics in Linguistics

Study of specialized topics in linguistics. E.g., language and thought, language acquisition, second-language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and language and literature.

115 Chaucer

Studies in the poetry of Chaucer with emphasis on the *Canterbury Tales*; a study of Chaucer's language directed toward the ability to read the poetry with ease and understanding.

118 20th-Century Literature

Reading and discussion of major works of literature written since 1900. Poetry, fiction, drama or essays included.

119 Contemporary Literature

Reading and discussion of contemporary poetry, fiction, drama, or essay, with occasional inclusion of other media.

120 The Short Poem

Study of the development of lyric poetry written in English from the 16th century to the present.

125 Film

Viewing and discussion of films with emphasis on theory, history and aesthetics of film.

126 Film

Viewing and discussion of films of a particular genre, country, or director. Examples: American comic film, Japanese film, film noir, films of Hitchcock. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

130 Single Author

Intensive study of the major works of one important author. Some attention to background and biography. May be repeated for credit as author varies.

138 Short Fiction

Close reading of short stories and novellas of the 19th and 20th centuries.

140 Studies in Literary Genre

Exploration of a particular literary genre. Examples of possible offerings: satire, tragedy, comedy, memoir, science fiction, detective fiction, Gothic fiction and nature writing.

141 Studies in Medieval Literature

Study of British literature through 1500, focusing on the period as a whole or some aspect of it. Examples of possible offerings: Chaucer and His Contemporaries; Fabliau and Romance; the Arthurian Tradition; Medieval Allegory and Enigma; the Sounds of Poetry—Prosody from Beowulf to Skelton.

142 Studies in Renaissance and 17th-Century Literature

Study of British literature from 1500 to 1660, focusing on the period as a whole or some aspect of it. Examples of possible offerings: Renaissance Drama Exclusive of Shakespeare; 16th-Century Poetry; 17th-Century Poetry; Prose of the English Renaissance; Tudor Humanism and Its Opponents.

143 Studies in Restoration and 18th-Century Literature

Study of British literature from 1660–1800, focusing on the period as a whole or some aspect of it. Examples of possible offerings: Tory Satirists; Johnson and His Circle; Prose Precursors and Novels; Pre-Romantic Poetry; the Emergence of the Professional Woman Writer.

144 Studies in 19th-Century Literature

Study of British literature from 1800–1900, focusing on the period as a whole or on some aspect of it. Examples of possible offerings: Romantic Poetry; Victorian Poetry, the Social Problem Novel; Gothic Fiction; the “Woman Question” in the 19th Century.

150 American Literature Before 1800

Study of American prose, poetry, and fiction of the 17th and 18th centuries with particular attention to the representation of cultural diversity. Readings may include Native American literature, Puritan journals and poetry, prose by the Founding Fathers, and “domestic” novels by women.

151 American Literature 1800–1900

Study of American prose, poetry and fiction of the 19th century from the Transcendentalists to 1900, with particular attention to the representation of cultural diversity. Readings may include the literary traditions of Native Americans, African Americans, immigrants and women.

152 20th-Century American Literature

Study of American prose, poetry and fiction of the 20th century, with particular attention to the representation of cultural diversity. Readings may include writers representing modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, the Jazz Age and the Great Depression, the literary traditions of Chicano-, Hispanic-, and Asian-Americans.

153 American Ethnic Writers and Oral Traditions

Study of the literary or oral imaginative achievement of an American ethnic or cultural group such as Native Americans, Asian Americans, American Jews, specific black cultural groups, Hispanic Americans or Chicano communities.

154 Studies in African-American Literature

Study of some aspect of the African-American literary tradition. Examples of possible offerings are: Oral Tradition and Slave Narratives, African American Novelists, the Harlem Renaissance, Contemporary African American Poets. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

160, 161 Development of English Fiction

Studies in the origin and development of the English novel with attention to foreign influences. **English 160** is not prerequisite to **161**.

162 The American Novel

Studies in the range of varieties of the American novel.

163 The Other English Literatures

Studies in literature in English outside the English and American traditions. Examples: the Commonwealth Novel, the African Novel in English, Writers of the Caribbean and Canadian Literature. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

167 Literary Criticism

Readings in the development of critical theory from Aristotle to Coleridge. *Prerequisite:* 29.

168 Literary Criticism

Readings in 19th- and 20th-century criticism and aesthetics. *Prerequisite:* 29.

170 Problems in Literary Theory

Intensive study of the varying problems in literary theory. Examples of recent course offerings: Metaphor, Symbol and Myth; Philosophy in Literature; Historical Perspectives in the Study of Literature; Feminist Theory. May be repeated for credit as content varies. *Prerequisite:* 29.

171 Literary Movements

Study of groups of writers related by time, place or interest. Examples of possible offerings are: The Metaphysical Poets, Modernism, the Bloomsbury Group, Negritude, American Expatriates, Surrealism, Feminist Literature, the Tory Satirists. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

173 Women Writers

Intensive study of some aspect of literature by women. Examples of possible topics are: 19th-Century British Novelists; Contemporary Women Poets; and American and Canadian Short Story Writers. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

175 Shakespeare

Close study of selected major plays and poems with attention to developing the ability to read the plays with ease and to experience them with pleasure. May be repeated for credit as topic varies.

180 Milton

Study of the minor poems, of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and of representative prose works such as the *Areopagitica*. Attention will be given to Milton's life and times.

182 The Drama

Study of ancient, modern and contemporary forms of drama. May include film and television. Attention is given to plays as works designed for performance. Emphasis on the structure and forms of dramatic texts.

183 Topics in Drama

Intensive study of a group of plays as products of their times and places. Examples of possible offerings are: Theater of the Absurd, Women Playwrights, Mythic Drama, Expressionist Drama, Restoration Drama. The plays are considered as works designed for theatrical production. May be repeated for credit as topic varies.

184 Contemporary Drama

Introduction to current plays by American and British playwrights. Attention is given to plays as works designed for theatrical production.

185 Individual Dramatist

Intensive study of the major works of one important dramatist. Some attention to background, biography and criticism, as well as to the plays as works designed for theatrical production. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

197 Special Study

An independent study or research for students whose needs are not met by courses available in the regular offerings of the Department of English. Permission of the instructor and the department chair required.

198 Senior Honors Thesis (Independent Study)

Directed reading and research under the supervision of a department faculty member, culminating in the writing of an academic thesis. Senior standing required. Course admission by application to department chairperson.

MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING

The MFA Program in Creative Writing is a two-year course of study in the genres of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. The program takes as its central mission the education and formal training of serious writers and is distinguished by its commitment to the writer as an intellectual functioning within a cultural context.

Combining work in writing, craft and literature, the MFA program requires completion of a creative master's thesis and 10 courses, including intensive writing workshops, craft seminars and literature courses.

C O U R S E S

200 MODERNISM AND MODERNITY

For the purposes of this course, "modernism" refers to the international artistic movement that involved many art forms and responded to a sense of social breakdown in the early part of the 20th century. At the heart of modernism lay the notion that the social, political, religious and artistic structures of human life may, in fact, be falsehoods or fantasies. As a result of this new sense of reality, aesthetics had to be revised: Order, narrative and unity began to reflect a *desire* for coherence rather than a mirror placed in front of nature. Some of the defining characteristics of modernist work are the following: social criticism, particularly of Victorian social mores; a radical re-examination of the nature of reality and time; construction out of fragments or "images"; alienation from accepted beliefs and social structures; an awareness of the nature of consciousness. That said, the definition of modernism should be fluid and allowed to evolve over time.

Through lecture and discussion, the course will cover many of the movements of modernism, including symbolism, decadence, futurism, cubism, expressionism, dadaism and surrealism, offering approaches to a selection of literary texts from the period. In addition, the course will consider modernism after World War II, looking for connections between modernism and the contemporary period.

211 FICTION WORKSHOP

This course is an intensive exploration of the ideas, techniques and forms of fiction with a primary emphasis on the careful analysis and discussion of student works-in-progress. Students will grapple with the questions of voice, point of view, dramatic movement, structure, rhythm and imagery, as well as with any and all issues of art and craft that arise from the individual manuscripts. By the end of the course, the students should develop the terminology and the critical skills for revising fiction, and should develop a good understanding about issues and trends in the genre.

212 POETRY WORKSHOP

The primary aim of this course is to allow the students as much freedom as possible in their writing while teaching them the skills to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The most important work for the student will be to locate his or her style or voice, with encouragement to produce at least one new poem per week. By the end of the course, the students should develop the terminology and the critical skills for revising poetry, and should develop a good understanding about issues and trends in the genre. Students may also be encouraged to write a poetic statement in which they will analyze their own poems—with particular attention to their development over the semester.

214 CREATIVE NONFICTION WORKSHOP

This course gives students the opportunity to explore material in various areas of nonfiction, such as memoir, personal essay, or travel writing. The course addresses issues of voice, scene, point of view, and theme, as well as any other elements of nonfiction writing that will emerge from individual manuscripts. By the end of the course, the students should develop the terminology and the critical skills for revising nonfiction, and should develop a good understanding about issues and trends in the genre.

221 TUTORIAL IN FICTION

Students will meet over the course of the semester with the instructor of the workshop for individual sessions to review strengths and areas for revision of manuscripts. The instructor will suggest additional reading, ideas for revision, writing exercises, and specific areas where a student might improve his/her craft.

222 TUTORIAL IN POETRY

Students will meet over the course of the semester with the instructor of the workshop for individual sessions to review strengths and areas for revision of manuscripts. The instructor will suggest additional reading, ideas for revision, writing exercises, and specific areas where a student might improve his/her craft.

224 TUTORIAL IN CREATIVE NONFICTION

Students will meet over the course of the semester with the instructor of the workshop for individual sessions to review strengths and areas for revision of manuscripts. The instructor will suggest additional reading, ideas for revision, writing exercises, and specific areas where a student might improve his/her craft.

231 CONTEMPORARY FICTION

A careful study of a range of important works by contemporary writers of novels and short stories with attention to thematic and formal analysis. Writers to be studied may include Martin Amis, Margaret Atwood, Michael Cunningham, Don DeLillo, Nadine Gordimer, Louise Erdrich, Carole Maso, Toni Morrison, Alice Munro, Joyce Carol Oates, and John Edgar Wideman.

232 CONTEMPORARY POETRY

This course will examine a variety of different trends in contemporary poetry and enable students to distinguish between some of the most important voices. The course is likely to explore the relations between contemporary poets and some of their precursors with an eye toward how these writers have affected such post-World War II movements as the confessional school, the beats, open field, the New York School, the Black Arts Movement, and the Language poets. It will also consider the poetry of the present day in which there is far less of a consensus as to which poets, trends or schools are central.

234 CONTEMPORARY CREATIVE NONFICTION

This course is a literary survey of contemporary nonfiction, including the personal essay and narrative nonfiction. Students will investigate the relationship between art and culture, between the writer and his/her society. The course will place special emphasis on formal analysis of themes and patterns in contemporary writing. Writers likely to be included are Jo Ann Beard, Joan Didion, Dave Eggers, Lucy Grealy, Pico Iyer, Mary Karr, Philip Lopate, Richard Rodriguez, Terry Tempest Williams and Tobias Wolff.

250 ALTERNATE GENRE

A writing workshop course in an alternative genre, such as playwriting, screenwriting or young adult fiction. This course explores the form's tradition, techniques and possibilities, and focuses on the analysis and discussion of student works-in-progress.

261 CRAFT SEMINAR IN FICTION

This course focuses on issues that influence the writing of fiction. Some seminars may focus on issues of craft or aesthetics—narrative structure in the novel, point of view, or dialogue—and others may be thematic in nature—historical fiction, realism or the postmodern ethos. Readings may include a wide range of fiction from diverse backgrounds and historical periods as well as the students' own works-in-progress.

262 CRAFT SEMINAR IN POETRY

This course focuses on issues that influence the writing of poetry. Some seminars may focus on issues of craft or aesthetics—figuration, the line, or open field theory—and others will be thematic in nature—politics and poetics, revolution and poetics, psychoanalysis and surrealism, nature poetics, etc. Readings may include a wide range of poetry from diverse sources and historical periods as well as the students' own works-in-progress.

264 CRAFT SEMINAR IN CREATIVE NONFICTION

This course focuses on issues that influence the writing of nonfiction. Some seminars may focus on issues of craft or aesthetics—narrative structure, point of view, or dialogue—and others may be thematic in nature or explore a subgenre of nonfiction—personal essay, memoir, nature writing, travel writing, humor, book review, historical narrative, biography, etc. Readings may include a wide range of nonfiction from diverse backgrounds and historical periods as well as the students' own works-in-progress.

280 INTERNSHIP

Students have the opportunity to pursue internships either for elective credit or as an extracurricular activity. The teaching internship is designed to permit the student to observe the conduct of a college course and to share the pedagogical activity of a supervising instructor. Students also have the opportunity to receive credit for internships in publishing, arts administration, or teaching writing in the community. Though students may pursue an internship in publishing or arts administration at any time in their studies, the program encourages students to do so in their second year. Furthermore, teaching internships are only available to second-year students.

290 THESIS

During the spring semester of the second year, each MFA candidate is required to pursue a tutorial course of study under the direction of an assigned faculty writer in the student's genre. Through this tutorial, the student performs the revision necessary to turn two years of writing into a coherent, polished book-length thesis: a collection of essays, poems, or short stories; a novel, a memoir, or other book-length work of nonfiction. Students meet with their thesis director several times during the semester to confer on the following aspects of the thesis: final revision and editing of individual pieces to be included in the manuscript, selection and arrangement of material, and coherence of the work as a whole. The student takes an oral examination with the thesis director and second reader in order to assess the student's knowledge of contemporary literary aesthetics and how they relate to his/her work. Upon satisfactory completion of the thesis and the oral exam, the thesis director and second reader approve the thesis.

Students are admitted to the program primarily on the strength of a manuscript of original work submitted with the application, which will be judged according to its literary merit and its indication of the author's readiness to study writing and literature on a graduate level.

For more information, contact the MFA Program in Creative Writing, P.O. Box 4686, Saint Mary's College, Moraga, CA 94575-4686, or phone (925) 631-4457 or (925) 631-4762.